



Natural Heritage &  
Endangered Species  
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife  
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MASSACHUSETTS ENDANGERED PLANTS

SCHWEINITZ'S SEDGE

(*Carex schweinitzii* Dewey ex Schwein.)

Description

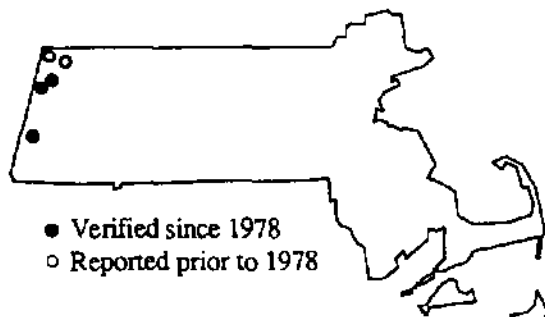
Schweinitz's Sedge, a member of the Sedge family (Cyperaceae), is a soft-stemmed, yellow-green, grass-like perennial that grows alone or in groups of a few individuals. The 3-7 dm (12 - 28 in.) high stem, or culm, is triangular in cross-section and rises from rhizomes (horizontal, underground stems). The soft, thin leaves are 4-10 mm (4/25 - 10/25 in.) wide. Culms have one staminate (male) and 2-5 pistillate (female) spikelets (unbranched, elongate inflorescences with stalkless, reduced flowers). Leaf-like bracts (modified leaves associated with inflorescences) extend well above the spikelets. Pistillate spikelets are slenderly cylindrical, 3-8 cm (1 1/5 - 3 1/6 in.) long and taper toward their bases. The pistillate scales (small, dry, and scale-like vestigial structures),



Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the US & Adjacent Canada. NY Botanical Garden, 1952.



Documented Range of  
Schweinitz's Sedge



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

which grow below each female flower, have long, saw-toothed awns (slender, bristlelike ends), while the staminate scales are awnless. The perigynia (sac-like structures that enclose the pistil) are papery, ovoid, inflated and end in a long, slender, two-toothed beak. The three-angled achenes (a type of dry, one-seeded fruit) mature between late May and late July.

#### Range

The documented range of Schweinitz's Sedge extends from Vermont to northern Michigan, and south to New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee and Missouri.

#### Similar Species

Hop Sedge (*Carex lupulina*) and Lurid Sedge (*C. lurida*) could be confused with *C. schweinitzii*. However, Hop Sedge has much longer perigynia--12-15 mm (1/2 - 3/5 in.) long, compared with 5.5 -7.2 mm (6/25 - 7/25 in.) in *C. schweinitzii*. And, in contrast to Schweinitz's Sedge, Lurid Sedge has a firm culm and grows in dense clumps.

#### Habitat in Massachusetts

Habitats in Massachusetts include a swamp, the edge of a swampy riverside cove, and an open, highly calcareous border of a seepy creek on the edge of a marshy area. Among the plants associated with Schweinitz's Sedge are various species of spike rush (*Eleocharis* spp.) and bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.). Three rare Massachusetts plants that have been found with *C. schweinitzii* are Foxtail Sedge (*Carex alopecoidea*), Hairy-fruited Sedge (*C. trichocarpa*) and Wild Black Currant (*Ribes americanum*).

#### Population Status

*C. schweinitzii* is presently listed as "Endangered" in Massachusetts, where there are three current stations (discovered or relocated since 1978) and two historical stations (unverified since 1978). Schweinitz's Sedge is also considered rare in Connecticut, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. The plant was present historically in Missouri.